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ABSTRACT

The ways states are improving their literacy services for adults with disabilities were examined through a national survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) and National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and case studies of three states: Oklahoma, Illinois, and Connecticut. The OVAE/NIFL survey established that nearly all states and territories were providing staff development to their literacy programs in the area of disabilities. Nearly two-thirds of the states were seeking ways to improve access for adults with disabilities through the development of demonstration projects. The approaches being used to improve access to literacy programs generally fell into the following three main groups: providing strong professional development, creating state-level collaborative groups, and developing and investing in screening and diagnostic procedures. Oklahoma was pursuing a strategy of extensive teacher training for adult education and literacy teachers. Illinois was conducting a pilot project to employ Temporary Assistance to Needy Families with learning disabilities. Connecticut was attempting to address the problem of improving disabled adults' access to literacy services through a state-funded technical assistance center. (Appended are the survey letter and a table detailing the responses received from the 54 states and territories.) (MN)

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State Policy Update



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY

How States are Improving Literacy Services for Adults with Disabilities

- July 15, 1999 -

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Recently the Federal government has shifted significant responsibility to states in the area of adult education and workforce development. Faced with performance measures and expiring welfare time limits, many states are struggling with how to help clients who have low basic skills -- which may be manifestations of disabilities. As a result, states are looking at how to improve success rates for persons with disabilities in basic skills and job training programs. To aid clients with multiple barriers to employment, some states are looking at improving services in adult literacy programs for persons with disabilities as part of welfare and workforce development program efforts. As states have been faced with additional responsibilities, programs and services have been developed to help in addressing these new issues. This State Policy Update report examines the results of a national assessment of how states are working to increase success rates for adults with disabilities and improve access for adults with disabilities to adult literacy programs. Many states are using similar methods to approach these issues. This Update includes a focus on three states, Oklahoma, Illinois and Connecticut, and one particular aspect of what each of these states is doing to improve literacy programs for persons with disabilities. While this Update focuses on state activities, we hope it will also stimulate efforts on the part of local literacy programs to better address this issue.

Recent requirements of the Workforce

Investment Act¹ (WIA) and Welfare-to-Work legislation² have given states more responsibility to demonstrate success in helping adults with barriers to learning and work gain educational and occupational skills, as well as obtain and retain employment. Disability is clearly considered one of these barriers.

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A joint project of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Learning, and the National Institute for Literacy

Under the WIA, states are required to:

- develop strategies to better serve low-income students, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with multiple barriers to educational enhancement.
- integrate adult education and literacy activities with career development, employment and training, and other activities.

In addition, in March 1998, President Clinton signed an Executive Order designed to expand efforts to increase access to education, employment, government, and private services for adults with disabilities. The Executive Order calls on programs working with welfare recipients to incorporate "reasonable accommodations" into education, job training, and employment settings.

Why Improve Access?

Recent federal activity is based in part on reports such as the 1993 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), which found that adults with disabilities generally have low literacy skills. The NALS showed a far higher percentage of

This State Policy Update is a joint effort of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Learning (OVAE/DAEL), and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). OVAE/DAEL and NIFL have worked extensively, both individually and together, on improving literacy services for adults with disabilities. Results of these efforts include:

- ◇ **The National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center (National ALLD Center) and its major publication, *Bridges to Practice: A Research-based Guide for Literacy Providers Servicing Adults with Learning Disabilities*, 1999.**
- ◇ **Four regional Learning Disabilities Training and Dissemination (LDTD) hubs, which work to support the National ALLD Center and state and national adult education and literacy systems in efforts to improve services for adults with learning disabilities.**
- ◇ **The report *Disability & Literacy: How Disabilities Issues are Addressed in Adult Basic Education Programs*, 1996.**
- ◇ **The Maryland state report *Vision for an Ideal System: Improving Services to Adults with Learning Disabilities*, 1997.**
- ◇ **The manual *Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education Programs*, published by the Division of Adult Studies, University of Kansas Center for Learning, 1998.**

This State Policy Update continues the efforts of OVAE and NIFL to better incorporate the issue of disabilities into adult basic education.

adults with disabilities functioning at the lowest of five proficiency levels than in the general population. While 21 percent of the general population functions at the lowest level, the rates for persons who reported having a disability range from 36 to 87 percent, as shown by the accompanying chart.³

As persons with disabilities become involved in work or return-to-work efforts, they are both seeking and being sent to adult basic education programs for support, and often finding these programs unprepared to help them. Moreover, in cases of "invisible disabilities" such as learning, hearing, or visual disabilities, a significant percentage of persons seeking literacy services may be unaware of their disabilities. Many of these adults either left the

K-12 educational system before special educational services were offered in school, or were not identified during their school years. Based on evaluation of research by the National Institutes of Health, it appears that a very large proportion of these unidentified persons are likely to be female.⁴

Even with the strong U.S. economy, states are finding it difficult to transition the "hardest to serve" population in adult literacy programs and remaining welfare caseloads (mainly female) into employment. States are reporting that, in addition to the significant barriers of transportation and child care, this "hardest to serve" population may also face barriers created by disability. Anecdotal reports are also showing states are finding many of the traditional programs used to improve skill levels, including adult basic education programs, are often unprepared to serve persons with disabilities.

Adults with Disabilities who Have Significant Literacy Needs

Type of Disability	Adults at the lowest proficiency level (in percentage)
Mental retardation	87
Learning disability	58
Visual difficulty	54
Speech disability	53
Mental or emotional condition	48
Physical, mental or other handicapping condition	46
Physical disability	44
Long term illness	41
Other health impairments	39
Hearing difficulty	36

Source: National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), 1993³

Have We Made Progress?

The challenge of providing appropriate services for adults with disabilities is compounded by the fact that literacy programs do not have the resources to fully identify or address disability issues. However, despite limited resources, the results of a recent OVAE/DAEL and NIFL national assessment indicate significant progress by most states in developing initiatives to improve adult education services to persons with disabilities. These efforts include demonstration programs connected to welfare reform and workforce development, as well as close collaborative relationships between the state department of education and other key stakeholders, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, to improve access for persons with disabilities who have literacy needs.

This progress can be measured against the findings of a report that was completed three years ago. In 1996, OVAE, NIFL, the Presidents' Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities, and the National Association of State Directors of Adult Education published *Disability and Literacy: How Disability Issues are Addressed in Adult Basic Education Programs*, exploring the issues of access to literacy programs for adults with disabilities. The report presented findings of a national focus group on how states are assuring that literacy programs are accessible, both programmatically and physically, to persons with disabilities. The report highlighted the activities of six states: Arizona, Kansas, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Washington and West Virginia. It found that marginal progress was being made even in states that had given the issue some priority, and that there was only minimal communication on this issue among interested parties in each state.

This *State Policy Update* follows up on the 1996 report in looking at state activity to improve access to literacy programs for persons with disabilities. This year, the state directors of adult education in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three territories responded to a NIFL and OVAE/DAEL inquiry. Their responses provide an extensive overview of efforts across the country. (See Appendix A for copy of the letter of inquiry, and Appendix B for inquiry results.)

State Actions

The OVAE/DAEL and NIFL assessment found that, across the country, numerous and significant efforts are being made to improve services for adult learners with disabilities. Nearly all states and territories are providing staff development to their literacy programs in the area of disabilities, and almost two-thirds of the states are seeking ways to improve access for adults with disabilities through the development of demonstration projects.

Demonstration Projects

With the recent emphasis on moving both adults with disabilities and welfare recipients into the workforce, it is not surprising that many projects couple efforts to improve access to literacy programs for adults with disabilities with welfare reform and workforce development efforts. In fact, 43 percent of the states reported a demonstration project related to welfare reform efforts. Two examples are New York and Vermont:

- New York has developed a project to serve the 20,000 TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) recipients suspected to have disabilities, providing screening for disabilities and referral to specific programs to provide accommodations and adaptation for disabilities.
- In Vermont, local providers of adult basic education (ABE) work with regional welfare offices to increase awareness of learning disabilities. Several staff trainings have been conducted by adult education to raise awareness among welfare workers.

State Efforts to Improve Access for Adults with Disabilities

<u>State Activity</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Providing staff development to literacy providers about disabilities	94
Providing technical assistance to Programs on how to comply with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA)	80
Ongoing relationships between state directors of adult education and state disability programs	80
Specific activity to improve access (e.g., demonstration program)	65
Activity is linked to:	
• workforce development	44
• welfare reform	43
• school-to-work efforts	20
Literacy offices helping local literacy programs conduct self-evaluations	35

Of the 44 percent of states and territories with demonstration programs connected to workforce development efforts, two examples follow:

- Washington State has a program that trains staff of workforce development programs, as well as staff of vocational colleges where basic skills programs are integrated with vocational and occupational programs.
- Workforce development is a major goal of Maryland's state adult education program, which includes strategies for specific workforce development activities for its clients with disabilities. In addition, in 1997 the Maryland State Department of Education, the NIFL and the National ALLD Center brought together 40 experts and adults with learning disabilities for a three day focus group to design an ideal model for services to adult basic education program participants who have learning disabilities. Results are detailed in the report *Vision for an Ideal System: Improving Services to Adults with Learning Disabilities*.

While a significant number of states have created programs in conjunction with welfare and workforce development efforts, only 20 percent of states and territories reported programs connected to school-to-work efforts. Two such states are Delaware and Oregon:

- Delaware's adult education program is developing a transition program with the Delaware K-12 program.
- The Oregon Department of Education works in conjunction with the University of Oregon to help learning disabled youth transition into community colleges.

Staff Development

Since 1996, the most growth in state efforts to improve literacy services for people with disabilities has been in staff development: 94 percent of states are providing staff development to literacy programs in the area of disabilities. Much of this increase can be attributed to states' use of the training of the National ALLD Center and the LDTD hubs. The main product of the National ALLD Center is *Bridges to Practice*, a comprehensive research-based guide, and accompanying training. It is designed to aid literacy practitioners in understanding learning disabilities, and in evaluating and selecting screening tools, curriculum materials, and

instructional strategies that are effective for adults with learning disabilities. State staff development efforts include:

- West Virginia, which provides all full-time ABE and TANF instructors, and some part-time teachers and volunteer literacy providers, with 48 hours of training in learning disabilities. Accommodations requests for the GED test have increased by

nearly 40 percent since the training began.

- Six Regional Professional Development Centers in Pennsylvania, which promote and provide training related to disabilities.
- Colorado, which has participated in two NIFL funded *Bridges to Practice* trainings, and is implementing state-wide pilot efforts to address instructional needs of adults with learning disabilities.

Bridges to Practice **Training Impacts:**

- ◇ **Broader awareness of learning disabilities and their impact on the provision of literacy services.**
- ◇ **Skills and tools for tapping the creativity and experience of literacy students with learning disabilities.**
- ◇ **A systemic approach to how programs could be more responsive to the needs of persons with learning disabilities.**
- ◇ **An action plan for how teachers can implement changes.**

Source: NIFL's National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center. *Bridges to Practice: A Research-based Guide for Literacy Practitioners Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities*. 1999.

Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Another finding of the OVAE/DAEL and NIFL review is that while most states (80 percent) provide technical assistance to literacy programs on how to comply with the ADA, only a little over a third of all state literacy offices (35 percent) help local literacy programs conduct self-evaluations for compliance. Self-evaluation is defined by the ADA as the process of a public entity evaluating its current services, policies and practices and subsequently modifying the services, policies and practices that do not meet ADA requirements. The ADA required that by 1993 all entities covered by the law were to conduct self-evaluations and, with the aid of

disability organizations, develop a plan for self-correction to assure access. The law also states that entities have an ongoing responsibility to assure access to any new program developed. Disability advocates' review of ADA implementation and evaluation shows that self-evaluation is crucial in ensuring that programs are indeed providing necessary and effective services to persons with disabilities. The OVAE/DAEL and NIFL inquiry results indicate that there is a need for more states to focus a greater effort on providing assistance to programs in self-assessment.

Examples of states providing technical assistance for ADA compliance include North Carolina and Wisconsin:

- North Carolina, which operates most of its adult education programs through 58 community colleges, has a staff member in each college responsible for ensuring ADA compliance. North Carolina also has a state-level staff member available for technical assistance.
- Wisconsin has a state consultant for special needs who meets periodically with local program administrators to update them on recent changes, court cases, and other events relating to the ADA. The state consultant also created a listserv that facilitates information dissemination about the ADA.

Thirty-five percent of states reported helping local literacy programs conduct self-evaluations for compliance with the ADA. Examples of the efforts of Kentucky and Massachusetts follow:

- The Kentucky Department for Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) provides each literacy program with a self-evaluation instrument, and requires each program to conduct its own study, and to assure ADA compliance in their contracts with DAEL.
- Massachusetts requires all state-funded programs to submit an annual 10 step compliance plan, which includes a self-evaluation and transitional plan.

State Level Relationships

The OVAE/DAEL and NIFL survey of the states also found that 80 percent have ongoing state-level relationships focused on the issue of ensuring access to literacy programs for persons

with disabilities. These state-level collaborations include state departments of adult education, disability programs, and other key interested parties. Three examples follow:

- Alabama reported a close and “very rewarding” coordination between the state director of adult education and the office of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- The Florida Employment Task Force for Adults with Disabilities is an interagency collaboration of the office of the governor, legislative officials and staff, the Social Security Administration, community colleges, and the Departments of Children and Family Services, Transportation, Elder Affairs, and Education, as well as other key stakeholders.
- Iowa reported a “strong and proactive relationship” in place since 1966 between state agencies dealing with adults with learning disabilities.

State Initiatives with Learning Disabilities Focus

Of the states that have created innovative programs to improve literacy services for their clients with disabilities, many are focusing their efforts on learning disabilities, which is prominent among disabilities faced in the adult literacy field. According to reports cited in a U.S. Department of Labor publication, estimates of learning disabilities range from 50 to 80 percent of all students in literacy and basic education programs, 15 to 24

Definition of Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities.

- ◊ **These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span.**
- ◊ **Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability.**
- ◊ **Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences.**

Source: National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1994.

percent of all participants in job training programs, and 25 to 40 percent of all adults on welfare.⁵

Arkansas provides an example of a learning disabilities-centered state initiative. Arkansas has provided training on learning disabilities since 1994 through the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center. Training includes information about programmatic access and ADA compliance. In addition, Arkansas has developed a policy manual to assist programs in achieving ADA compliance and providing appropriate services for students with disabilities. As an LDTD hub, Arkansas disseminates information and provides resources on learning disabilities, including training in *Bridges to Practice*, to 13 southern states. (This manual is available at www.aalrc.org.)

Another example of a learning disabilities-focused state initiative is in Ohio, which recently developed an intervention project with the goal of increasing the capacity of Ohio ABLE (Adult Basic and Literacy Education) programs to identify and support adults with learning disabilities or difficulties. To move this project forward, the Ohio state director of adult education is working with the Ohio Governor's Council on People with Disabilities and the Ohio Rehabilitations Service Commission to establish a formal planning and coordination relationship.

Case Studies: Oklahoma, Illinois, and Connecticut

Analysis of the national disability survey shows that states are using a variety of approaches to improve access to literacy programs for persons with disabilities. These generally fall into three main groups:

- *Providing strong professional development.* Participating in a variety of intensive trainings gives literacy teachers and program administrators information and tools to better serve students with disabilities, including information about the use of accommodations and assistive technology as appropriate educational supports.
- *Creating state-level collaborative groups.* State task forces, working groups, and policy teams create a formal group of stakeholders with specific outcomes and objectives, and shared resources. Based on the goal of helping adult learners with disabilities advance in adult education programs, state-level partnerships have been created between state departments of education and programs such as welfare-to-work efforts, workforce

development programs, state offices of Vocational Rehabilitation, universities and community-based disability programs.

- *Developing and investing in screening and diagnostic procedures.* Some states have developed their own screening tools or have worked with private contractors to implement other screening protocols. States have also partnered with Vocational Rehabilitation, universities, and psychological associations to develop a diagnostic follow-up process to screening procedures.

The following are detailed examples of current initiatives three states are implementing to improve access to literacy programs for persons with disabilities. While Oklahoma, Illinois, and Connecticut all employ some or all of the strategies mentioned above, this report will focus on one particular element of work in each of the three states:

- Oklahoma: Extensive teacher training for Adult Education and Literacy teachers.
- Illinois: Pilot project to employ TANF recipients with learning disabilities.
- Connecticut: State-funded technical assistance center.

Oklahoma

Three years ago, Oklahoma began an effort to achieve systemic change in improving services for adults with disabilities, especially learning disabilities, who need Adult Education and Literacy services. Efforts were instituted at the local and state levels simultaneously, with extensive training of teachers conducted at the local level.

Oklahoma's Adult Education and Literacy program is in its third year of a project to provide intensive training for Adult Education directors and teachers in working with adults with learning disabilities and physical disabilities. To date, approximately 100 Adult Education teachers have participated in the training effort. The goals of the 13-day training are to:

- improve awareness and understanding of adults with disabilities, especially learning disabilities.
- promote understanding of the differences between assessment, diagnosis, and screening and be able to apply appropriate screening.

- instruct teachers in how to use specific techniques and instructional strategies when instructing individuals who may have a learning disability.
- inform directors and teachers so they are able to provide referrals to other resources in the community for adults with disabilities.

As part of the training, adult education teachers are learning the differences between accommodated instruction and the use of accommodations for adults diagnosed with learning disabilities. Teachers also learn how to assist adults in obtaining the required documentation of learning disabilities for accommodations on the GED Tests. Between the workshop sessions, teachers are required to do independent assignments with their adult education students so that the new strategies and techniques learned in the training may be applied and practiced.

Staff Development in Oklahoma Includes Training in:

- ◇ **Understanding the characteristics of learning disabilities.**
- ◇ **Recognizing self-esteem and social skill issues and providing ways to foster development in these areas.**
- ◇ **Understanding the differences between assessments, diagnosis, screening, and special needs inventories.**
- ◇ **Using effective instructional techniques and strategies for people with disabilities.**
- ◇ **Understanding the importance of technology and implementing its use for adults with suspected or diagnosed learning disabilities.**
- ◇ **Accessing current national and state resources.**

The training is being provided by consultants nationally recognized as specialists in the area of working with adults with disabilities. During the third year of the training, a "Train-the-Trainer" segment has been added so that six trained teachers will now be able to provide training for other teachers and program directors, locally and regionally. At the conclusion of the "Train-the-Trainer" segment, the trainers will train five to 10 Adult Education teachers each year, thus continuing the training effort at the local level throughout the state. Also, two days of follow-up training are held annually for teachers who have completed the intensive learning disabilities workshops.

Teacher training includes learning about screening tools and diagnostic resources, and how to provide referrals to community resources for adults with disabilities, such as Rehabilitation Services counselors, and optometrists.

One such referral tool was developed by Oklahoma's State Superintendent's Task Force on Supporting Adults with Learning Disabilities. Created to strengthen the communication and collaboration among state agencies which serve adults with learning disabilities, the task force has compiled a directory of professional psychologists and counselors throughout the state who are willing to provide diagnostic services, some without charge. The directory, which will soon be expanded to include optometrists and audiologists, serves as an important link from classroom learning disabilities screening to diagnosis. In general, the Task Force provides an important impetus and vehicle for systems change at the state level.

Many of the teachers participating in the learning disabilities training project work with TANF clients, and several teach classes consisting solely of these clients. One example of this collaborative approach is in the town of Chickasha, Oklahoma, where the local Adult Education and Literacy program provides the initial basic skills assessment for all TANF clients in the county. This assessment may include a screening for learning disabilities, if appropriate. Clients who are in need of adult literacy services and who, based on the screening, are suspected of having learning disabilities are immediately placed in an instructional program taught by an Adult Education teacher trained in working with adults with disabilities, and may also be referred for diagnosis.

Oklahoma's training efforts are also linked to workforce development programs. Many of the Adult Education teachers who are participants in the learning disabilities training provide Workplace Education programs for both employed and unemployed underemployed workers. These classes are held at the workplace and provide instruction in the job-specific skills identified by local employers as necessary for success in entry level jobs. As a result of the integration of workplace education instructional strategies with strategies for teaching adults with suspected learning disabilities, both employed and unemployed underemployed adults have access to job-specific, basic skills instruction that can improve their job retention and job

obtainment rates, and also allow them to benefit from job training opportunities offered by employers.

In October 1999, the learning disabilities training will expand to include adult education teachers in the Department of Corrections. The prison population nationwide is estimated to have an extremely high occurrence of learning disabilities. One teacher from each of Oklahoma's 17 state prisons will participate in a training specifically designed for use in correctional facilities.

In addition to the private trainings, Oklahoma has participated in two *Bridges to Practice* trainings by the NIFL's National ALLD Center. Many aspects of the *Bridges to Practice* training will be incorporated into the state's learning disabilities efforts.

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Illinois

Among a number of initiatives designed to improve literacy services for adults with disabilities, Illinois has developed a pilot project with the goal of ensuring that adult educators can successfully prepare and place welfare recipients with learning disabilities into living wage jobs. This project, the Employability Program for TANF Clients with Special Learning Needs,

provides comprehensive services through extensively trained Illinois Department of Human Services case managers, learning disabilities instructors, adult education counselors, and employment specialists.

In response to welfare reform's recent work-first emphasis, Illinois recognized the importance of developing a process for identifying TANF clients with disabilities, finding their instructional strengths and barriers, and implementing education and pre-employment services that directly address their special learning needs. Last year, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) convened a Learning Disabilities Policy Team to assist in the planning and implementation of the TANF Clients with Special Learning Needs Employability Project. The ISBE subsequently targeted \$10 million in its budget appropriations to serve clients who are welfare recipients. This year, ISBE will convene a state level policy team made up of education, human service, rehabilitation, and employment specialists to share policies and procedures on disabilities.

Illinois' TANF Special Learning Needs Employability Project is a cooperative pilot project between the ISBE and the Illinois

Department of Human Services (IDHS). The goal of the project is to develop a comprehensive service delivery system for TANF clients suspected of having learning disabilities.

Objectives of Illinois' Employability Pilot Project for TANF Clients with Special Learning Needs

- ◇ **Implement a learning disabilities screening tool and process to be used by welfare case managers. Train case managers in the tool's administration and interpretation.**
- ◇ **Develop a thorough assessment process for learning disabilities, to be used on TANF client's arrival at pilot project.**
- ◇ **Establish referral process for formal learning disabilities diagnosis to Northwestern University's Learning Disability Clinic or local resources for pilot clients.**
- ◇ **Create a job development and placement process, including training staff on appropriate matching of client's skills to jobs.**
- ◇ **Implement an employability program integrating a competency-based curriculum, learning disabilities strategies, participatory education, and metacognition approaches.**

Initiated by two Chicago area adult education programs, the pilot project provides TANF clients with 16 weeks of:

- assessment and counseling.
- educational, employability, and work-based experience components.
- job development and placement.

Implementation of the pilot began with 46 IDHS case managers receiving training on special learning needs, adult education, and the pilot project. This training included criteria IDHS can use to detect the possibility of a learning disability. Using these criteria, case managers refer clients suspected of having learning disabilities to the IDHS Education and Training staff, 15 of whom have been trained to administer a 14-question learning needs screening. Clients who are red-flagged through that assessment are referred to the adult education program where the pilot project is housed for assessment, instruction, and job placement. IDHS staff report that this training enables them to better serve clients, and offers a needed referral for clients with suspected learning disabilities.

At the adult education program, clients are given other tests to determine their eligibility for and ability to benefit from the pilot project. If eligible, clients receive a hearing and vision screening and referral for diagnostic testing. Screenings are provided through the Chicago Department of Health and local hospitals.

Before instruction begins, clients receive a battery of tests to determine learning strengths and deficit areas. These tests are administered by pilot staff trained by the Northwestern University Learning Disability Clinic. Test analysis results form the basis for the teaching and learning process in the employability instructional and job matching phases. Adult educators in the instructional component receive intense initial and ongoing training and support on a project-developed employability curriculum that includes activities integrated with compensations, adaptations, and modifications.

The pilot also provides a variety of workplace-based activities for clients through an employment specialist. The employment specialist works with clients to understand and assess

literacy levels, learning strengths, learning deficits, and career goals. The specialist then provides guidance on assisting the client in specific areas of career exploration, and all subsequent employability and workplace-based instruction is designed and provided with attention to the client's learning deficits and strengths. Workplace-based activities include:

- *Field studies.* Introduced in the first week of instruction, field studies may include visits to the local Illinois Employment and Training Center, the local library, and employers.
- *Job shadowing.* The employment specialist has developed an employer base to provide job shadowing opportunities. A client's learning strengths and deficits, job skills, and interests guide the matching process.
- *Internships.* Unpaid internships are chosen by the client, employment specialist, and program staff by determining which of the job shadowing experiences the client felt was the best match of skills and learning strengths, and for which there was the possibility of implementing disability-related compensations, accommodations, and modification strategies to overcome potential challenges. Ongoing support is provided through the internship.
- *Mentoring.* A potential feature in future classes will be a mentoring component to support the clients during the internship. Employers hiring clients will be encouraged to designate a workplace mentor. Participating employers will be provided training in the mentoring component by the employment specialist, and program staff will introduce clients to mentoring.

These four workplace-based activities are followed by job development and placement, follow-up and post placement support services, and a monthly alumni reunion, all coordinated by the employment specialist. Student reaction to the assessments, one-on-one teaching, workplace field trips, job shadowing, and mentoring provided by this project has been positive.

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Connecticut

The Connecticut Postsecondary Disability Technical Assistance Center at the University of Connecticut collaborates with the Capitol Region Education Center/Adult Training and Development Network, and the State Department of Education's Bureau of Career and Adult Education to offer LD awareness, LD strategies, and interactive LD problem solving presentations throughout the state. The Center has also facilitated a Reading Expo and an introductory workshop on teaching reading to adults and reading assessment. There has been a steady increase in the use of the Center's services by Adult Education, Coordinated Education and Training Opportunities (CETO), and Workforce Development Board staff seeking help in how to best meet the educational needs of adults with learning disabilities, as well as other disabilities.

Objectives of Connecticut's Technical Assistance Center

- ◇ **Provide technical assistance and current information to a network of contact persons in Adult Education programs and Workforce Development boards on adults with disabilities.**
- ◇ **Provide training for adult education, CETO, and workforce development board staff on the needs of adults with learning disabilities.**
- ◇ **Establish a train-the-trainers' model to deliver learning disabilities awareness workshops throughout the State.**
- ◇ **Facilitate ongoing networking and training for directors and local contact persons in adult education and training programs.**
- ◇ **Partner with the State Department of Education/Bureau of Career and Adult Education Learning Disabilities Focus Group to monitor and plan ongoing activities that are responsive to the adult education and training field.**
- ◇ **Assist in the development of the "Annual Conference on Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities."**

Since 1991, the Connecticut Department of Education's Bureau of Adult Education has supported several initiatives to help service providers meet the needs of adults with disabilities, especially those with learning disabilities. Direct technical assistance has been the main focus of Connecticut's effort for the past seven years. With funding from the State Department of Education, the Postsecondary Disability Technical Assistance Center at the University of Connecticut has provided technical assistance and training to Adult Education, CETO, and workforce development board professionals.

The Technical Assistance Center is systematically working with Connecticut's Adult Education programs and Workforce Development Boards to meet the needs of adults with disabilities, particularly those with learning disabilities and other learning difficulties. Almost 400 requests for services from adult education and training professionals have been received over a seven-year period, averaging 56 requests per year. Information dissemination and telephone consultation are the most frequently requested forms of technical assistance. Client satisfaction over the seven years has been at or above a 4.47 rating, (on a scale of one to five with five as excellent). The overall rating for the past three years has been 5.0.

**Information Provided by the
Connecticut Technical Assistance
Center**

- ◇ **Legal issues (Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act)**
- ◇ **Learning disabilities assessment**
- ◇ **Instructional strategies and materials**
- ◇ **Accommodations**
- ◇ **Service delivery**
- ◇ **Systemic change policy and procedures**
- ◇ **Funding**
- ◇ **Staff development and training**
- ◇ **Client advocacy**
- ◇ **Assistive technology and software**

Through the collaborative efforts of the Center and the State Department of Education, Connecticut offers staff trainings and workshops to raise learning disabilities awareness and develop strategies for addressing the learning needs of adults with learning disabilities and other learning difficulties. The training is a joint effort of the Connecticut Bureau of Career and Adult

Education and the University of Connecticut, and has been presented throughout the state to adult educators, Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program operators, Workforce Development Boards, literacy program administrators, teachers, counselors, tutors, and staff of the Departments of Labor and Social Services. Approximately 400 professionals participated in the 1998-99 annual conference and training workshops.

The training efforts are designed to assist participants to:

- understand and learn to identify the needs of adults with learning disabilities.
- explore the legal aspects of providing appropriate services.
- identify appropriate instructional strategies, accommodations, and program modifications for use with adults with learning disabilities.
- explore how teaching and learning styles impact adult learning.

In 1998 and 1999, 76 percent of all requests for information were about learning disabilities, and 24 percent were about such disabilities as mental retardation, hearing impairments, and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Future directions of the Center include an increased focus on adults with learning disabilities in employment and training environments.

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Conclusion

The review conducted by OVAE/DAEL and NIFL finds that states and territories have made significant progress over the last three years in improving access to literacy programs for adults with disabilities. While this progress is dramatic and encouraging, the review also indicates that significant needs remain to be met.

Among the review's positive findings, states are increasingly taking advantage of resources such as the *Bridges to Practice* guide and trainings, the University of Kansas manual on accommodations, and private consultants to support their efforts to provide services for adults with disabilities who have literacy needs. Ninety-four percent of states are providing training to their staff in this area. Many states, exemplified here by Oklahoma, Illinois, and Connecticut, are taking a variety of innovative approaches to these issues and are in the process of developing replicable models.

Among the areas of concern, fewer than half the states are linking their efforts to welfare reform and workforce development programs. While we applaud the states that are doing this work, the remaining states need to look at ways to build better connections with welfare and workforce development efforts.

The review further reveals that many states are not fully assisting their programs to come into compliance with the ADA through use of the self-evaluation process. Only about a third of states are providing direct technical assistance in self-assessment to help programs comply with the programmatic and physical accessibility requirements of the ADA. We urge the remaining two-thirds of the states to become active in providing this important kind of assistance.

The review also shows the need for states to look at the issue of programmatic access to literacy programs for people with disabilities. While it appears that most states have a good understanding how to improve physical access, many need a better understanding of how to improve programmatic access.

One of the key accessibility issues is the right of the adult learner to use accommodations in appropriate settings. Without active state support for the self-evaluation process, we are likely to see continued limited access to the use of accommodations by persons with disabilities. One example of this problem is the low accommodation rate on GED tests; only two-tenths of one percent of all GED test takers gain accommodations for learning disabilities.⁶

Responsibility for progress does not rest at the state level alone. Literacy practitioners at the local and regional level can actively support their states in strengthening existing activities and developing new efforts. For instance, they can –

- request that the state provide information about and access to available training opportunities that may not be reaching all who need them.
- ask states for assistance in creating self-assessment procedures.
- set examples for their states by implementing some of the best practices included in this report – such as enlisting the help of learning disabilities diagnosticians or arranging for free vision and hearing tests – at the local or regional level.

OVAE/DAEL and NIFL will continue joint efforts to provide programmatic and training support in the area of disabilities. We will also continue to partner with states to help them develop their own models to better serve adults with disabilities who have literacy needs. It is our hope that this *Update* will provide state leaders and other stakeholders with information about resources that can help them continue, expand, or begin efforts to meet the needs of this population.

End Notes

¹ Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220).

² Title IV, Part A of the Social Security Act as amended by the recent enactment of the Balance Budget Act of 1997 (Signed by the President August 6, 1997).

³ Kirsch, Irwin S., Jungeblut, Jenkins and Kolstad. *Adult Literacy in America: A First Look at the Results of the National Adult Literacy Survey*. National Center for Education Statistics. 1993.

⁴ Young, Glenn, Kim and Gerber. Gender Bias and Learning Disabilities: School-Age and Long-term Consequences for Females. *Learning Disabilities: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. 1999. (In print).

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor. *The Learning Disabled in Employment and Training Programs*. 1991.

⁶ American Council on Education, GED Testing Service. *Who Took the GED?, GED 1997 Statistical Report*. 1997.

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Susan Green	National Institute for Literacy, Washington, DC
Alice Johnson	National Institute for Literacy, Washington, DC
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Barbara Luciano	Adult Learning Center, Oklahoma City, OK
Diane Lund	Illinois State Board of Education, Chicago, IL
Daniel Miller	Illinois State Board of Education, Springfield, IL
Susan Perez	Tolton Adult Education Center, Chicago, IL
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Linda Young	Oklahoma Department of Education, Oklahoma City, OK

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U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult
Education, Division of Adult Education and Learning

For copies of this report, please call toll-free (877) 433-7827, or visit the NIFL website at www.nifl.gov/policy/disability.htm.

For copies of the Maryland state report *Vision for an Ideal System: Improving Services to Adults with Learning Disabilities*, please call toll-free (877) 433-7827.

For copies of *Disability & Literacy: How Disabilities Issues are Addressed in Adult Basic Education Programs*, please call toll-free (877) 433-7827, or visit the NIFL website at www.nifl.gov/LD/disabliter.htm.

To obtain a copy of *Bridges to Practice* please contact the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center at (202) 884-8185 or toll-free (800) 953-ALLD (953-2553), or by email at info@nalldc.aed.org.

For copies of the Kansas manual *Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education Programs*, contact the Division of Adult Studies, University of Kansas Center for Learning at (785) 864-4780 or email at pixie@ukans.edu.

This *State Policy Update* was produced by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Learning, and the National Institute for Literacy.

Recommended Resources

Directory of National Disability Organizations and Agencies Internet: www.pacer.org/natl/yellowna.htm <i>A list of national disability organizations and agencies, and contact information.</i>	Directory of State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies Internet: www.ssa.gov/work/statevra.htm <i>A list of vocational rehabilitation agencies for every state, and contact information.</i>
Job Accommodation Network (JAN) West Virginia University PO Box 6080 Morgantown, WV 26506-6080 (800) 526-7234 (V/TTY) Internet: janweb.icdi.wvu.edu <i>An international service that provides information about job accommodations and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).</i>	National Institute for Literacy Learning Disabilities Listserv Internet: www.nifl.gov/nifl-ld <i>Listserv provides a forum for online discussion about learning disabilities. Listserv archives make previous discussions also available.</i>
Roads to Learning American Library Association Audrey Gorman, Director (agorman@ala.org) (800) 545-2433, ext. 4027 Listserv: PLLD-L@ala.org Internet: ala8.ala.org/roads <i>The Public Libraries' Learning Disability Initiative encourages linkages among libraries and community organizations to improve services to people with learning disabilities, their families, professionals, and others.</i>	Seattle King County Private Industry Council Market Place One, Suite 250 2003 Western Avenue Seattle, WA 98121-2162 (206)448-0474 Internet: www.skcpic.org <i>Provides information about how to design a One-Stop learning disabilities system, general information about learning disabilities, and the Washington State Learning Screening Tool.</i>
LD Online Internet: www.ldonline.org <i>Provides information about learning disabilities, definitions, national and state resources, a calendar of events, a forum for on-line discussion, and other resources</i>	U.S. Department of Justice ADA Home Page Internet: www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm <i>Provides free ADA information, including technical assistance materials and a toll-free information line.</i>

The National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center Academy for Educational Development 1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20009-1202 (202) 884-8185, (800) 953-ALLD (953-2553) Fax: (202) 884-8429, (202) 884-8422 Email: info@nalldc.aed.org Internet: novel.nifl.gov/nalldtop.htm <i>Promotes awareness of the relationship between adult literacy and learning disabilities, and builds the capacity of literacy practitioners to help identify and serve adult students with learning disabilities. Materials available include Bridges to Practice, a list of state resources and toll-free numbers for literacy and learning disabilities.</i>	President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities 1331 F. Street NW, Suite 300 Washington, DC 20004 (202) 376-6200, TDD (202) 376-6205 Fax: (202) 376-6219 Email: info@pcepd.gov Internet: www50.pcepd.gov/pcepd <i>Provides information, training, and technical assistance to business leaders, organized labor, service providers, and individuals with disabilities. Also provides information on the ADA, and sponsors employment fairs for job seekers with disabilities.</i>
Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Suite S-2312 Washington, DC 20210 (202) 219-6081, TTY (202) 219-0012 Email: ptfead@dol.gov Internet: www.dol.gov/dol/_sec/public/programs/ptfead/main.htm <i>Makes recommendations to the President and creates a coordinated and aggressive national policy to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities.</i>	National Council on Disability (NCD) 1331 F. Street, NW, Suite 1050 Washington, DC 20004-1107 (202) 272-2004, TTY (202) 272-2074 Fax: (202) 272-2022 Email: mquigley@ncd.gov Internet: www.ncd.gov <i>Promotes policies, programs, and practices that guarantee equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities, and empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, inclusion and integration into all aspects of society.</i>

Northridge Center On Disabilities
California State University
18111 Nordhoff Street
Northridge, CA 91330-8340
(818) 677-2578 Voice/TTY/Message
Fax: (818) 677-4929
Email: ltm@csun.edu
Internet: www.csun.edu/cod

Provides information on assistive technology.

Learning Disabilities Association of America
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234-1349
(412) 341-1515
Fax: (412) 344-0224
E-mail: ldanatl@usaor.net
Internet: www.ldanatl.org

A national volunteer organization for individuals with learning disabilities, their families and professionals. Dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all individuals with learning disabilities and their families through advocacy, education, research and service.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY

FEB 16 1999

Dear Colleague:

The US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) are developing a second report on the issues of disability and literacy. We are seeking your help in developing this report.

In 1996, OVAE, NIFL, the Presidents' Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities (PCEPD), and the National Association of State Directors of Adult Education published a report, *Disability and Literacy*. This report presented the findings of a focus group on how states were assuring that literacy programs were both programmatically and physically accessible to persons with disabilities. The six states represented in the focus group were:

Arizona
North Carolina

Kansas
Washington

Massachusetts
West Virginia

Response to the first report has prompted us to take steps to develop a second report on literacy and disability. For this report, we are seeking to highlight initiatives and programs in all states and territories that focus on accessibility to literacy programs for people with disabilities, as well as efforts to connect other disability service programs to adult literacy programs. This includes efforts in the areas of:

- learning disabilities
- developmental disabilities
- mental health disabilities
- any other targeted physical or mental impairment groups.

To help us with this work, please provide information in the following areas:

For all "yes" answers, please provide a description of the effort. Please keep your responses brief but informative—including descriptions of model projects, etc.

Name, phone and e-mail of state contact in literacy for disabilities Issues

Name _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

- 1) Do you have any specific activity such as demonstration or pilot projects with regard to access for adult learners with disabilities to literacy programs? Yes No

Are these connected in any way to welfare reform efforts? Yes No

Are these connected to any other workforce development programs? Yes No

Are these connected to school-to-work transition programs? Yes No

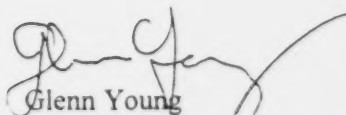
- 2) Are you providing staff development to your literacy programs in the area of disabilities? Yes No
- 3) Do you provide technical assistance to literacy programs on how to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA?) Yes No

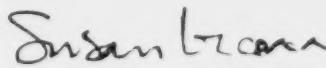
Has your State Literacy Office helped local literacy programs conduct "self-evaluations" for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act? Yes No

- 4) What kind of ongoing relationships exist between the State Director of Adult Education and state disability programs, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, the Governors' Committee on Disability Issues, or the Developmental Disabilities Planning Councils? Please describe relationships and goals.

Our goal is to have all states and territories provide information. We are hoping for your support in this matter. To ensure that your state is represented in this report, please send your response to Glenn Young at OVAE by March 15, 1999. NIFL and OVAE will provide you with a mock-up of the page concerning your state for your review prior to publication.

Sincerely,


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Appendix B

Number of responses	State or Territory	Activity such as a pilot program with focus on access?	Is this activity linked to welfare reform?	Workforce Development?	School- to-Work?	Providing staff development to literacy programs in the area of disabilities?	Providing technical assistance on how to comply with the ADA?	Does the state literacy office help local programs conduct self evaluations?	Ongoing relationships with the State Director of Adult Education and state disability programs?
		Question 1	1a	1b	1c	Question 2	Question 3a	3b	Question 4
1	Alabama	yes	no	no	no	no*	no*	no*	yes
2	Alaska	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no
3	Arizona	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no
4	Arkansas	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
5	California	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
6	Colorado	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
7	Connecticut	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
8	Delaware	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes
9	District of Columbia	no*	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no*
10	Florida	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes
11	Georgia	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no
12	Hawaii	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no
13	Idaho	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no
14	Illinois	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
15	Indiana	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
16	Iowa	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	yes
17	Kansas	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
18	Kentucky	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
19	Louisiana	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	no	yes
20	Maine	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
21	Maryland	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
22	Massachusetts	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
23	Michigan	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no
24	Minnesota	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no

Number of responses	State or Territory	Activity such as a pilot program with focus on access?	Is this activity linked to welfare reform?	Workforce Development?	School- to-Work?	Providing staff development to literacy programs in the area of disabilities?	Providing technical assistance on how to comply with the ADA?	Does the state literacy office help local programs conduct self evaluations?	Ongoing relationships with the State Director of Adult Education and state disability programs?
		Question 1	1a	1b	1c	Question 2	Question 3a	3b	Question 4
25	Mississippi	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
26	Missouri	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
27	Montana	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
28	Nebraska	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	yes	no
29	Nevada	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
30	New Hampshire	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
31	New Jersey	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no*
33	New Mexico	no	no	no	no	no*	no	no*	no*
33	New York	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
34	North Carolina	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes
35	North Dakota	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
36	Ohio	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
37	Oklahoma	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
38	Oregon	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
39	Pennsylvania	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
40	Rhode Island	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
41	South Carolina	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
42	South Dakota	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
43	Tennessee	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
44	Texas	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes
45	Utah	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
46	Vermont	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no*	yes
47	Virginia	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes
48	Washington	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes

Number of responses	State or Territory	Activity such as a pilot program with focus on access?	Is this activity linked to welfare reform?	Workforce Development?	School- to-Work?	Providing staff development to literacy programs in the area of disabilities?	Providing technical assistance on how to comply with the ADA?	Does the state literacy office help local programs conduct self evaluations?	Ongoing relationships with the State Director of Adult Education and state disability programs?
		Question 1	1a	1b	1c	Question 2	Question 3a	3b	Question 4
49	West Virginia	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
50	Wisconsin	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes
51	Wyoming	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no*	no
	American Samoa	No response							
52	Guam	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes
53	Northern Marianas (Saipan)	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	yes
	Puerto Rico	No response							
54	Virgin Islands	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes
Total of yes responses		35	23	23	10	50	41	19	40
Percentage		65%	43%	44%	20%	94%	80%	35%	80%

*In the planning stages

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